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SUBJECT: PM JA'FARI TELLS CODEL HAGEL WAR ON TERROR IS MORE DANGEROUS THAN BIRD FLU

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT FORD FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim Ja'fari told Senator Charles Hagel, Senator Thomas Carper, Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher, and Ambassador in a December 2 meeting that Iraq has accomplished much in 2005, but much work needs to be done. The most pressing problem, Ja'fari warned, is that terrorism in Iraq is spreading and is "more dangerous than bird flu." More help is needed to build up ISF and IP so that they are capable of facing AIF on their own. He also asked the U.S. to continue supporting capacity building efforts. Agreeing with President Bush, Ja'fari said that early withdrawal of Coalition Forces would be a victory for AIF. He reiterated his support for democracy and human rights, and said the abuse of detainees by Iraqi forces would not be tolerated. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) Ja'fari pointed out that numbers of IP and ISF have increased by 1/3 over the course of 2005, and said this is a major success for the Iraqi people. Iraq is now 2/3 of the way toward its goal. More help from the U.S. and its allies is needed, however, to build Iraq's capacity to secure itself. "Any setbacks," Ja'fari said, "would be setbacks for Iraq, the Middle East, the United States, and democracy everywhere." He admitted, however, that Iraq must work harder and be more serious about being able to stand on its own.

3. (C) Ja'fari noted that Iraq's experience with democracy is taking place in a region that does not have democratic traditions. He expressed his hopes that Iraq's experiences will have a positive impact on the region. Iraq wants to work with all of its neighbors, he said, but does not want any to have undue influence in Iraq. Speaking specifically about Iran, Ja'fari said that simply sharing the Shia faith does not mean that Iraqis want to be Iranian agents. He compared the relationship between Iraq's Shia Arabs and Iranians to that of the Irish and Filipinos: while both groups are predominantly Roman Catholic, this does not mean they necessarily share a special relationship.

4. (C) Some of Iraq's neighbors, Ja'fari said, promote terrorism, either by lending support to Iraqi insurgents and criminals, or through interfering via foreign intelligence services. Revanchists from the previous regime and suicide bombers also work to destabilize Iraq.

5. (C) Ja'fari reaffirmed Iraq's commitment to human rights, saying that any abuse of detainees held by GOI would not be tolerated. Upon hearing of prisoners abused by Iraqis, Ja'fari said he immediately set up a committee to investigate and find out if the problem is widespread. Ja'fari said he expects the committee to present its findings to him soon
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